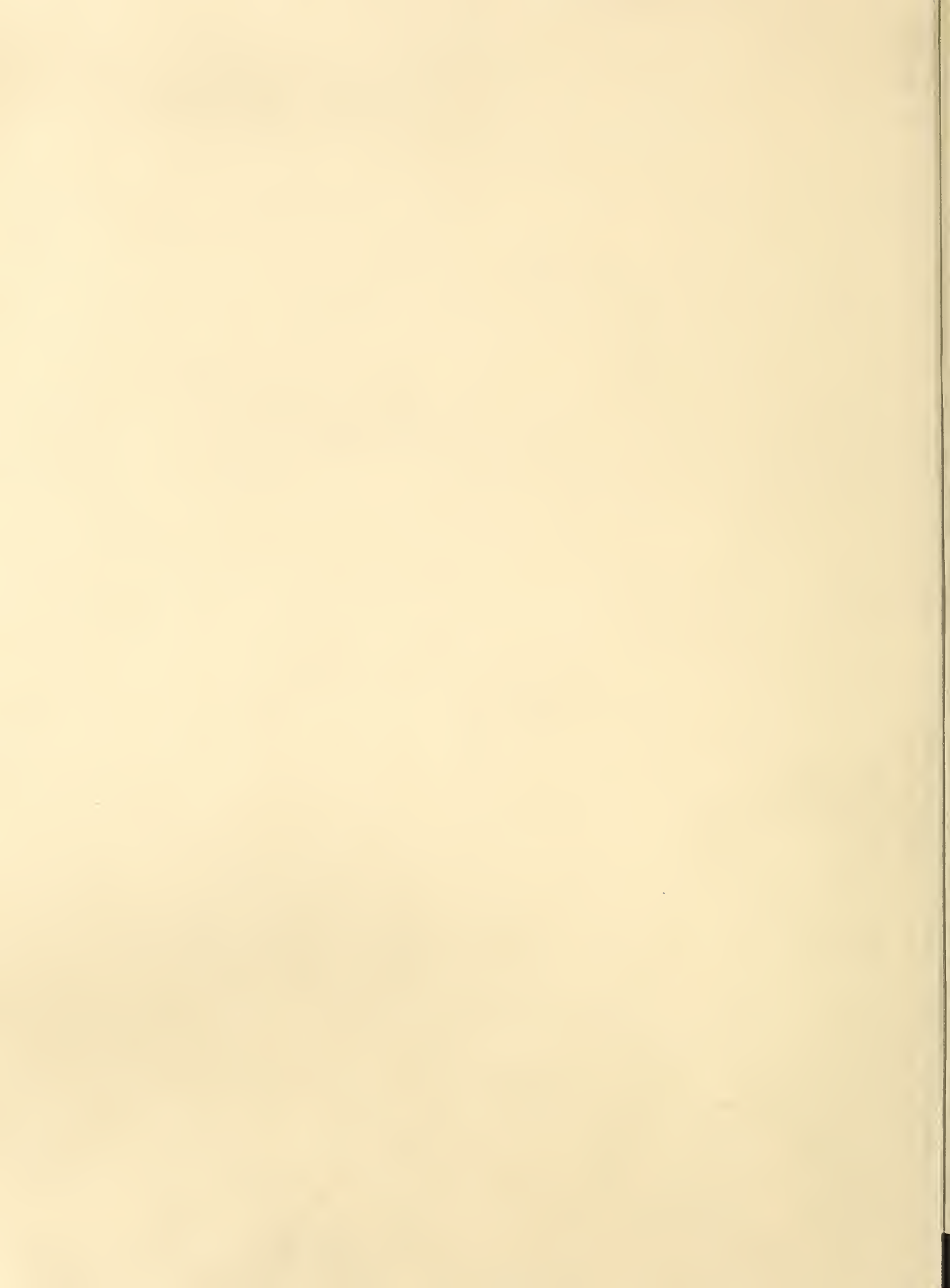


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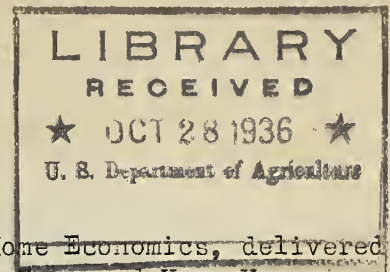
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Question and Answer Day



A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, July 16, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: Now the next person you'll be hearing from is Ruth Van Deman -- here again to bring you news from the Bureau of Home Economics.

Ruth, that's quite a bunch of mail you have there. You get letters like that every day?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh, this is just a sample out of the day's mail at the B.H.E. We get about 65,000 letters a year. And a great many of them come from homemakers who ask us all sorts and kinds of questions. Sometimes we have the answers and sometimes we don't. This last week in spite of the heat and drought and everything, letters kept rolling in about canning, and jelly making, and pickling.

Here's one about blackberry jelly. I'm glad somebody's berries had a chance to ripen before the dry weather shriveled them up on the bushes.

Well, this jelly maker writes: "Why is it I have trouble with blackberry jelly sometimes and not others? Sometimes it just won't stiffen. This time my berries were very ripe and very sweet."

We'll stop right there. That's probably the answer. "Very ripe and very sweet".

You know as I've said before about jelly, you have to have a perfect balance between acid, pectin, and sugar. It's those three things that make the perfect jelly triangle.

Probably that blackberry juice wasn't tart enough if the fruit was very sweet, to start with. But that trouble could have been remedied. If 1 tablespoon of strained lemon juice had been added to each cup of the strained blackberry juice, then probably the jelly would have come out all right. That is, unless the fruit was very much over-ripe and past the stage where it is rich in pectin. You know, when some fruits get too ripe, they lose the pectin that makes them good jelly makers. But oftentimes all blackberry juice needs is more acid. If you put in a tablespoon of strained lemon juice to each cup of the blackberry juice as you add the sugar, that will turn the trick in your jelly making.

Now one suggestion about fruit grown under drought conditions. It is much less juicy than is normally the case. But you can still use it for jelly, if you cook it with more water than you ordinarily use and cook it a little longer, so as to soften it thoroughly and get the pectin extracted in the juice.

Fruit varies so much that I can't be absolutely definite on this point. But going back to blackberries, it might be something like this.

With firm blackberries or black raspberries, you'd ordinarily add 1/4 cup of water to each pound of fruit to cook it up for jelly. Now for berries that have ripened during the dry weather you might just double that quantity of water. Add, say 1/2 cup of water to each pound of berries, and cook until they are soft and the seeds show.

Now here's a question on pickles. Somebody in Virginia asks: "Is there a special art in making dill pickles? I've never been able to make a satisfactory job of it. My pickles get soft".

That's a good question. Yes, there is an art and a science in making pickles. It would take some time to go into it. I think we'd better save that for another day. I'll send that lady a copy of our mimeographed booklet on home-made pickles and relishes. And, by the way, that's available to any one else who wants a copy. I remember in 1930, when the drought was so bad, that was the biggest pickle-making summer on record. Cucumbers seemed to be one of the few things that grew in spite of the heat and the dry weather. So if you have a good crop of cucumbers in your garden this summer, we'll be glad to tell you how to dill them so they won't get soft. And also how to dill green tomatoes and green peppers. If you've ever tried them, you'll know what a good relish they are to go with meats.

Now, let's see. Here's another on jelly. A homemaker in Detroit wants to know why crystals form in her grape jelly, and her grape juice.

Well, that seems to be one of the things that cultivation has done to our native grapes - over-supplied them with potassium acid tartrate, in common language, cream of tartar, so that it forms sour, gritty crystals in the juice after it's extracted. There are three ways you can use to keep these crystals out of your grape jelly. After you extract the juice from the grapes, let it stand overnight in the refrigerator. Some crystals will form and drop to the bottom. Then you can siphon the clear juice off or put it through cheesecloth to strain out the crystals. That's one way. Another is to can the juice and let it stand some time before you make it into jelly. That way even more of the tartar crystals will settle, and you can strain them out. Or, still another way, is not to try to get the tartaric acid out of the grape juice but to put other fruit juice, like apple, with it so that there won't be enough of the acid in the mixture to crystallize. Of course that way you have grape-apple jelly instead of straight grape, and some people like it better.

And by the way, here's something about apple jelly I want to read to you. It has nothing to do with the science of jelly making. These are a few lines from a poem of Elizabeth Coatsworth's.

"Why, I have known
Happiness blaze for hours
With no more fuel
Than apple jelly
Standing on a sill
Glowing and shining
Like a country jewel."

Well, by that token, I suppose we might call grape jelly an amethyst-a royal purple amethyst.

But getting on with our letters, here are two from the West, out where the mountains are high and the air is light. One from Colorado, one from Montana. They ask about the effect of altitude on canning. "Do you have to process your canned food longer in a high altitude?"

Yes, altitude does make a difference in canning. Most time-tables for home canning are worked out on the basis of atmospheric conditions at about sea level. As the altitude increases, you need to add 1 pound of pressure for each 2,000 feet of elevation. I'd suggest to people living in the Rocky Mountain States that you write to your own State college of agriculture for canning time-tables worked out to suit the high altitudes out there. Or if you like, we'll send you our canning bulletin prepared for homemakers in any State, and from the figures there you can make adjustments to suit your location.

And that's about as far as we can get with the air mail today. But I'll be back again next Thursday. Good-bye, until then.

